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AVHGC-DST

11 FEB 1969

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report

Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development  
 Department of the Army  
 Washington, D. C. 20310

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1. Attached are three copies of the Senior Officer Debriefing Report prepared by Colonel Robert G. Shepherd, Commanding Officer, 34th General Support Group (AM&S).

2. The proposed recommendations and the opinions expressed in the report should not be construed as reflecting the official view or opinion of Headquarters, USARV.

3. The following comments are made with respect to the contents of the report:

a. Reference page 2, paragraph 5: Years of experience have taught us that aviation maintenance and supply are inseparable. It is evident that two separate command organizations below the brigade level would have an extremely difficult time achieving common objectives, common operating procedures, and equal responsiveness. Aviation supply and maintenance functions have a direct influence on aircraft availability. To divorce the two at company and battalion level would drastically reduce the maintenance unit commander's influence over aircraft maintenance production.

b. Reference page 2, paragraph 6: Span of control for the proposed Commanding Officer, Aviation Supply Group is excessive. In addition to the rather large staff, he has two depots and ten DSSA activities to command. One individual cannot effectively control so many different agencies.

c. Reference page 2, paragraph 6: The problems cited herein; reference the length of tour, required learning curve, and on the job training requirements are not peculiar to the 34th General Support Group. This is an Army wide problem, the solution to which, appears to be increased emphasis and greater command interest in on the job training. A reorganization will not negate the training and supervision problems referred to.

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AVHGC-DST

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report

4. Colonel Shepherd is recommended as a candidate guest speaker at appropriate service schools and joint colleges.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

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*C. D. Wilson*  
C. D. WILSON  
1LT AGC  
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Country: Republic of Vietnam

Debrief Report by: Colonel Robert G. Shepherd

Duty Assignment: Commanding Officer  
34th General Support Group (AM&S)

Inclusive Dates: 18 October 1968-8 January 1969

Date of Report: 8 January 1969

**1. References:**

- a. Army Regulation 1-26, 4Nov66.
- b. USA RV Regulation 1-3, 1Jun68.

**2. The undersigned has occupied two assigned positions in Vietnam since 6 January 1968.**

a. Commanding Officer, US Army Aviation Materiel Management Center (6Jan68-17Oct68), a subordinate unit to the 34th General Support Group, and which serves as the Inventory Control Center for all Army aviation parts in Vietnam.

b. Commanding Officer, 34th General Support Group (AM&S), (18Oct68-8Jan69), which is the organization responsible for the Direct Support Aviation Maintenance for units not having organic DS capability, for the General Support Aviation Maintenance for all Army aircraft, and for the Direction and Management of the Aviation Supply effort in Vietnam.

**3. The recommendations made herein are:**

- a. Appropriate only to the present situation existing in Vietnam, and to the several courses of action being considered for T-Day implementation.
- b. Not a basis for submission of proposed TC&E changes to Department of the Army for world-wide implementation.

4. In view of the comparative recency of a similar debrief report submitted by Colonel James W. Sandridge Jr., the preceding Commander, this report will not concern itself directly with restatements of mission, existing organizational structure, concept of operations, etc. Instead, this report will present ~~for consideration~~ a proposed realignment of some responsibilities, a restructuring of certain units to streamline and simplify training and performance requirements, and a discussion of the advantages that would accrue as well as the disadvantages that may be foreseen.

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5. The following steps are believed to be appropriate and necessary to enable optimum mission performance within allocated resources. This restructuring can be accomplished within current space ceilings, although some elements would be staffed on an austere basis not conducive to rapid expansion or maximum flexibility.

a. Elevate the present 34th Group organization to Brigade status, and reorganize it as depicted on inclosure 1A.

b. Organize a Group to manage and direct the performance of Aviation Maintenance functions. A recommended organization is depicted on Inclosure 1B.

c. Reorganize the current USAAMMC as an Aviation Supply Group in the manner depicted on inclosure 2A.

d. Detach the resources used at Battalion and Company level to manage and operate the Direct Support Supply Activities (DSSA), and designate them as detachments. They should be under the command and operational control of the Supply Group. As an associated action each of the DS maintenance companies should retain approximately four enlisted spaces to operate an organizational, technical, or shop supply section. This activity would be limited to stockage of not more than seven days supply of common use items and those items frequently and routinely demanded in their shop operations. Their other supply requirements would be satisfied by requisitions placed on the DSSA in the same manner presently used to support other units.

6. The current concepts and established procedures are soundly conceived, and are adequate in most areas, if properly implemented. Most of the difficulties we experience arise from improper implementation or from failure to utilize developed procedures. Several of the factors which have an adverse impact on the logistical support programs in Vietnam are listed below:

a. The shortness of the prescribed tour, particularly in key positions, and the frequent rotation of commanders, results in a constant turnover of personnel. With this turnover there are related changes in emphasis on certain objectives, a learning curve for new personnel before they become fully effective, and a frequent paucity of qualified personnel due to lack of assignment, training, knowledge, or practical experience of replacements and the problem of getting the replacement oriented to a minimum degree of qualification by the person he replaces. Lack of time available for overlap is a contribution to this latter deficiency. Many of the replacements received require almost total training qualification after arrival in-country. The time and supervision to accomplish this satisfactorily simply does not exist.

b. The rapid escalation of grade to levels that require knowledge normally gained by practical experience at lower grade levels has resulted in a condition that provides both officer and enlisted personnel of grade levels prescribed in current TO&E's, but who lack the experience and training prerequisite to the qualities of knowledge and judgment expected of occupants of the positions to which these personnel are frequently assigned.

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Many commanders in company and field grades, and most intermediate supervisors in the enlisted ranks, require extensive on-the-job training to properly qualify them for successful performance in their positions of leadership and supervisory responsibility. Errors in judgment and omissions in required performance are a day-to-day event in many organizations, and the additional burdens placed on more senior personnel, both officer and enlisted, to direct, manage, guide and train their units, greatly overextends the acceptable span of control.

c. The current instructional courses presented at CONUS training installations in areas of logistical support, both general and specific, are frequently inadequate to qualify a successful graduate for effective service in Vietnam. At best, most such personnel have a license to learn, and need far more practical exposure before being asked to assume the responsibilities most frequently inherent to their future assignments. Possession of an MCS is no longer a bona fide certification of possession of a stated skill.

7. The increasing emphasis on fiscal and resource economy has had noticeable effect. However, it is frequently dependent for conceptual outline, for specific guidance, and sometimes for successful execution on the assignment of more mature personnel to positions and duties normally associated with lesser grades. This has two adverse effects. First, it tends to frustrate the more senior personnel who participate in, or actively execute, the missions of their subordinates due to the inability of those subordinates to operate effectively within acceptable time frames. It should be noted that these shortcomings are not due to lack of motivation, eagerness, or potential. It is simply that there are far too few personnel properly qualified at appropriate grade levels. Secondly, the tendency of senior personnel to assume responsibilities from their subordinates in an effort to achieve satisfactory and timely performance denies the junior personnel the full benefit of exposure to conditions and the environment of practiced decision that is vitally necessary for their proper development to meet degrees of responsibility inevitable in their future assignments.

8. The proposed realignment of functions and reorganization of units would provide an adjustment to the foregoing conditions designed to narrow the required span of supervisory control and to permit greater and more profitable specialization within specific fields. It is not intended to split the responsibility for aircraft maintenance and supply. These two functions are mutually inseparable in planning, programming and execution of aviation support, and the necessary unity of command is retained at the proposed Brigade level. Due to the austerity of resources, both personnel and materiel, and the magnitude of the demand for effective aircraft maintenance and supply, it is deemed appropriate to specialize one Group in the major planning, programming and direct management of each of these two major functions.

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Neither is susceptible to amalgamation with other categories of maintenance or supply where responsiveness at a far lesser impetus than is demanded in the aviation field is the normal and expected schedule of events. The high cost of aviation assets, the expenditures in material to keep them serviceable and their frequently critical availability, justifies the command emphasis normally exerted at all higher echelons of command; but this same command emphasis demands a qualification and performance not universally compatible with the grades, training, and numbers of personnel normally authorized and assigned.

9. The organization proposed for the Aviation Maintenance Group is a functional one, intended to provide a means to expeditiously accomplish aircraft maintenance in a minimum of time. It divorces the units, commanders, and staffs from the necessity for major dual qualification, and enables those commanders to rely with greater certainty on effective support from a unit with a more specialized performance capability. This same feature, by shrinking the span of control and management, makes the revised organizations better able to absorb personnel with minimum qualifications and bring them to an acceptable level of effectiveness in a shorter time frame.

10. Inclosure 3, less tab A and tab B, reflects the present geographical distribution of all DSU/DSSA's in Vietnam. Tab A identifies which of these are under the command and control of the 34th General Support Group. Tab P identifies those which are organic to the several Divisions.

11. Inclosure 4, tab A, reflects one method of combining DSSA's at a single geographical location so as to:

- a. Reduce stockage requirements.
- b. Reduce facility requirements.
- c. Increase ASL lines due to consolidated demands.
- d. Reduce personnel staffing requirements.

12. The proposal to create DSSA detachments and place them under the command and operational control of the Aviation Supply Group Commander offers several additional advantages of note.

a. The Supply Group Commander can establish, implement, and enforce standardization of policies on a scale not feasible today, because of the many problems of qualitative personnel assignment, qualification, training, and performance as noted above.

b. The Supply Group Commander, having a broader base of personnel to draw from for specific and key assignments, and having unilateral responsibility for supply effectiveness, could balance his staffing by infusing DSSA's with personnel trained to his specifications, objectives, and procedures, as DSSA personnel rotated.

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The availability of a larger staff would enable closer control of qualitative performance and would provide the experienced personnel needed to guide and assist those of lesser qualification. In addition this feature would provide a means to gain cognizance and control of all theater assets for utilization in satisfaction of high priority EDP requisitions. It is estimated that approximately three-sevenths of theater resources in spares and parts are presently located at DSSA level where their location and availability is seldom known or exploited by other than the possessing DSSA.

c. Because of the centrally directed responsibility for performance from Depot to DSSA level, it would become more feasible in the environment existing in Vietnam to conduct more effective staff assistance visits, training and orientation seminars, and technical training sessions for the supported unit personnel. By this means, and because of the easier accessibility to knowledge and understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the supply system, and the reasons for and benefits of the standardized prescribed procedures, the frequency of errors or violations should decrease substantially.

13. Additional personnel, facility, and resource economies could be realized by consolidating DSSA's in areas where two or more are now in close geographical relationship.

a. Advantages of this feature include:

- (1) Increase of lines meeting ASL qualification because of pooled demands.
- (2) Reduction in requirement for constructed facilities at diverse locations.
- (3) Simplified distribution and transportation program.
- (4) Better utilization of critical skills.
- (5) More flexible staff capability.
- (6) Ability to continue support of specified units from selected other DSSA's when and if the unit, or its normal DSSA, were selected for movement, inactivation, or redeployment during the time of preparation for that action.

b. Disadvantages of this feature include:

- (1) Necessity for supported units to go a greater distance to the consolidated DSSA site than to the sites of the present co-located DSSA.
- (2) Potential impact on effectiveness of DSSA operations if a DSU supported by a consolidated DSSA were relocated a greater distance where such support would no longer be feasible. However, under these conditions it is assumed the consolidated DSSA could cadre a DSSA at approximately one-half to two-thirds authorized strength and reconstitute an ASL from within its own strength and resources in an acceptable time frame.

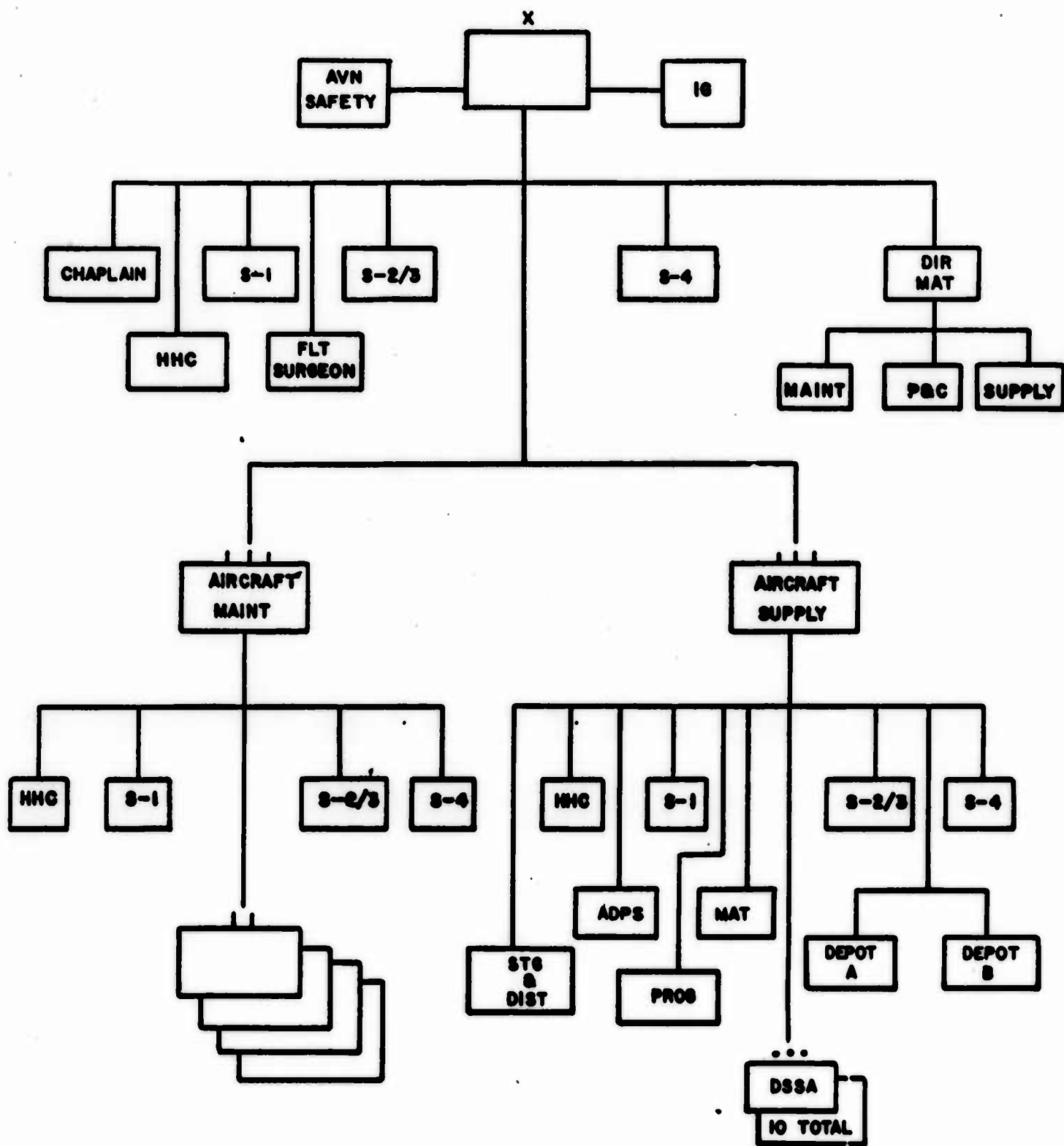
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14. Recommend this proposal be considered for feasibility in Vietnam in view of the present situation and potential developments.

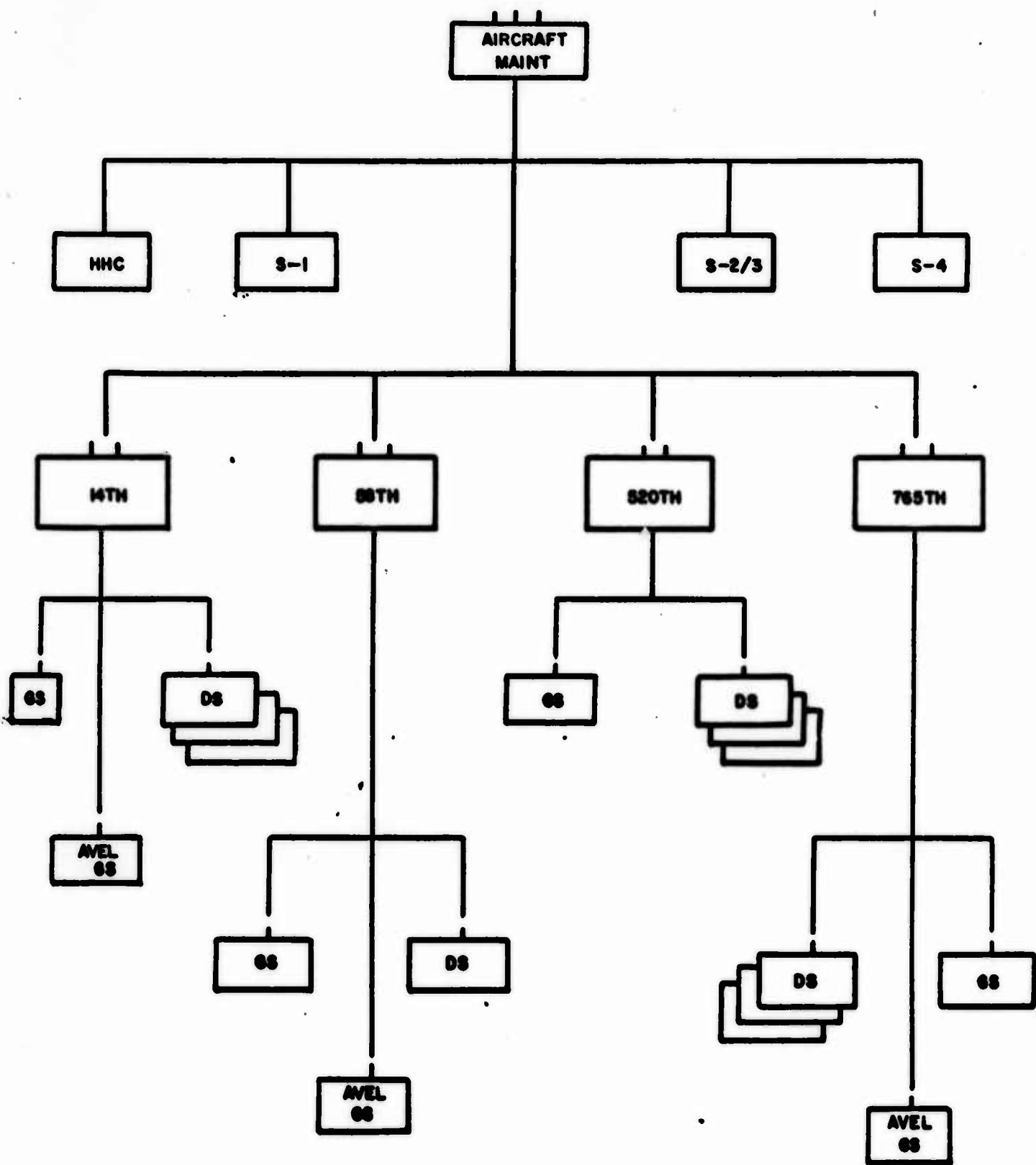
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Colonel, TC  
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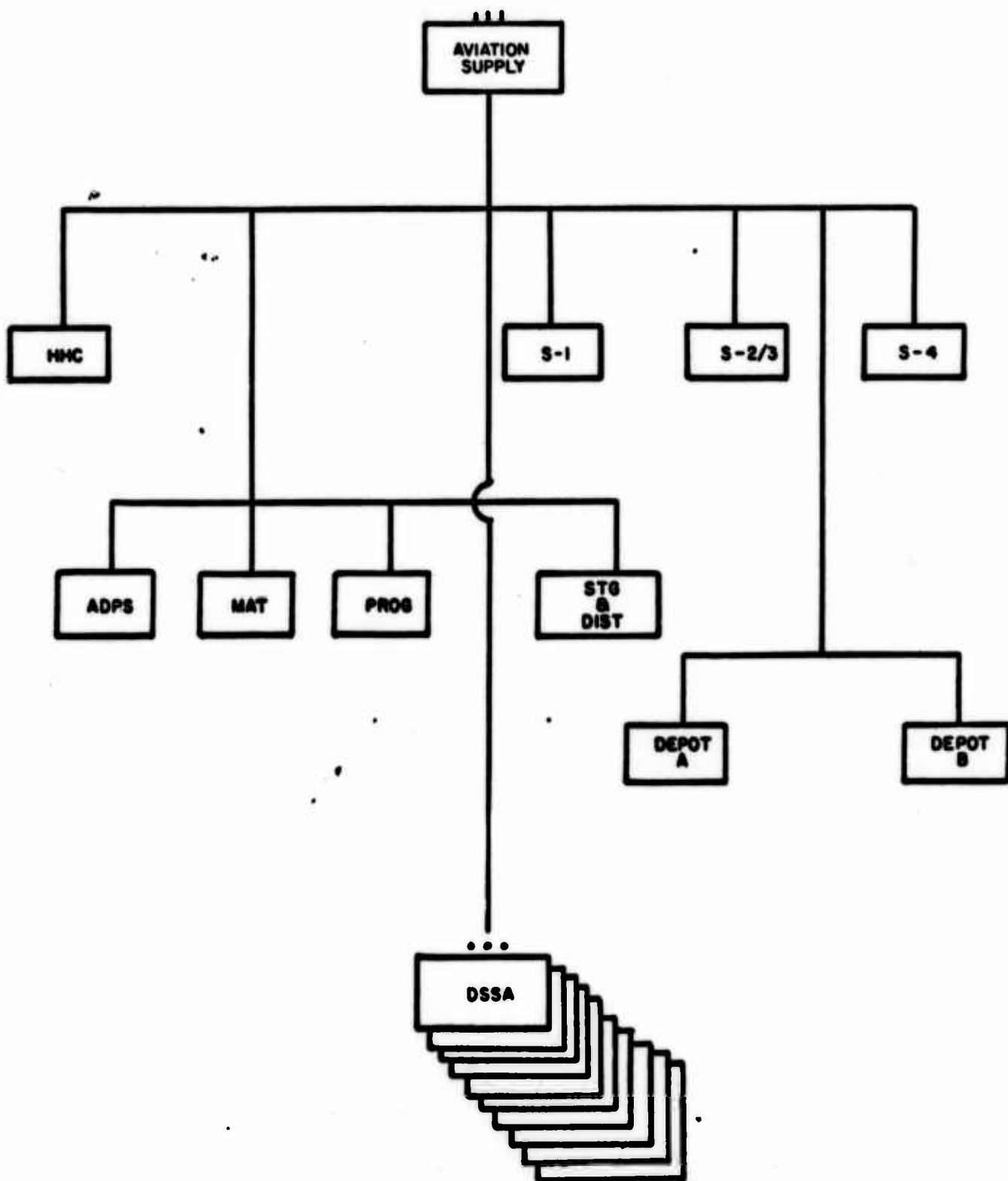
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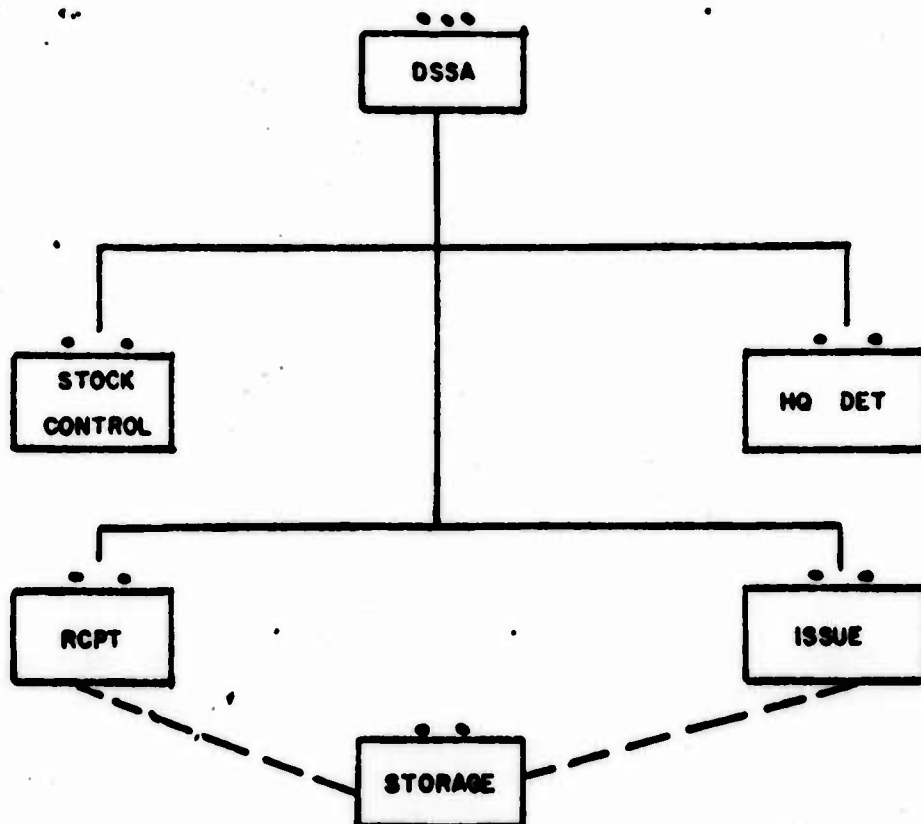


Incl 1B



Incl 2A





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